

# **\*\*ATTENTION\*\***

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# WASHINGTON WILDLIFE

## In Fall



*This section of Washington Wildlife is an overview of wildlife-related recreational opportunities around the state. Persons who plan to fish or hunt in Washington should first consult the current Game Fish Seasons and Catch Limits and Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlets available from hunting and fishing license dealers throughout the state. Those who wish more up-to-date, detailed information should contact the Game Department office for the region they plan to visit.*

### Ephrata Region

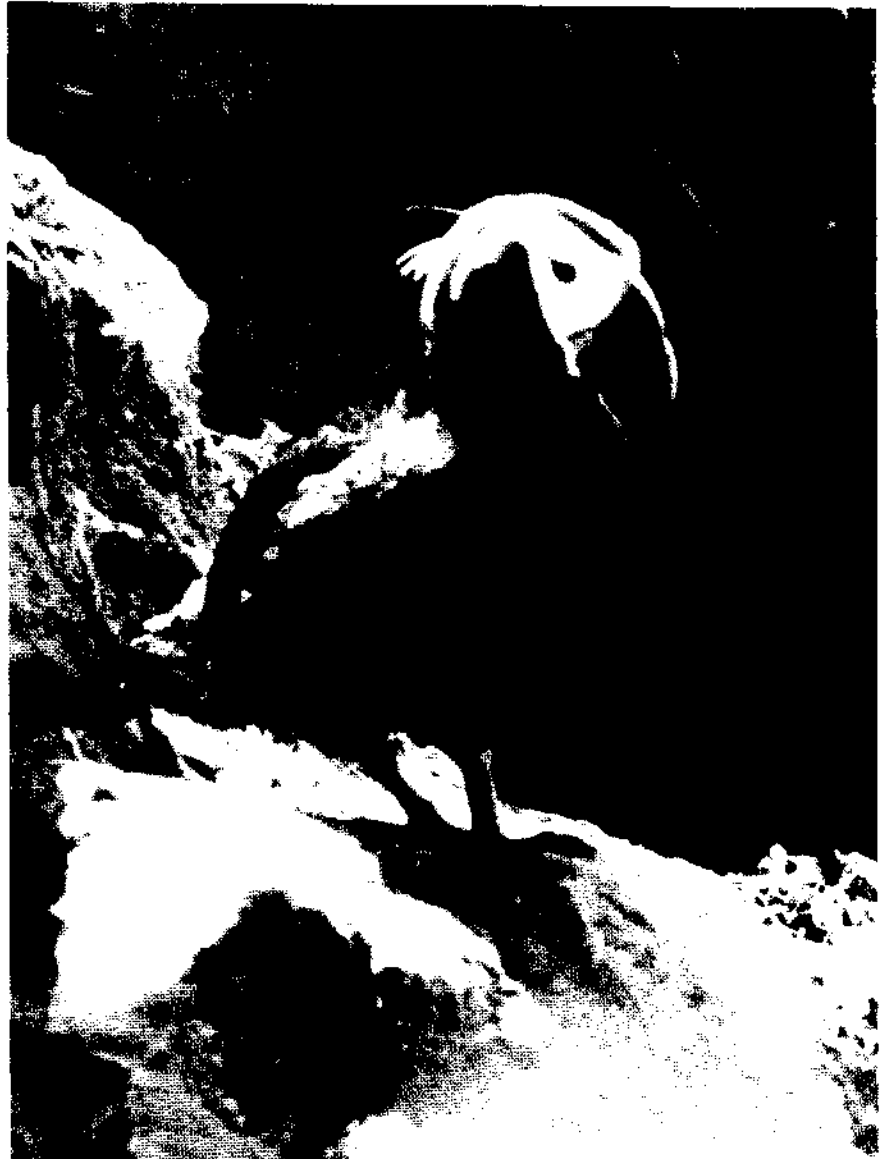
*(Adams, Franklin, Grant, Okanogan and Douglas counties)*

**Fishing opportunities** are excellent in this region during fall. With cooler temperatures, fish become more active and often provide **plenty of action for late-season anglers**. Fall outings in the Okanogan offer bonus attractions of mixing fishing with **grouse hunting, collecting wild mushrooms or watching nongame birds** in migration — all in a setting of dazzling fall colors. **Trout fishing in the high lakes** of Okanogan County should pick up after Labor Day and continue through closing on October 31. **Lowland lakes** such as Campbell, Cougar and Davis in the Methow drainage open September 1 and will provide **excellent trout-ing**.

**Molson Lake** near Oroville also opens September 1, and **Jameson Lake** (Douglas County) reopens on this date. Both should yield plenty of **fat rainbows** through the end of October. Try **Rat Lake** for trout from November 1 on through winter.

**Trout fishing** is expected to be good on *Selective Fishery* waters such as Ell, Chopaka and Moccasin lakes (Okanogan County), and Dry Falls, Lenice, Merry and Nunnally lakes in Grant County. **Rainbows and browns** run 15" to 18" with an occasional lunker. **Check pamphlet for specific regulations** on these waters.

**Year-around trout waters** in the Desert and Seep lakes HMAs should produce well during fall. Trout will probably run a little smaller on some waters (Desert, Harris, Beda, Brookies) because of competition from **increasing populations of pumpkinseed sunfish**.



*An uncommon sight, tufted puffins are found on the open sea or on off-shore islands along the Washington coast year-round. (Game Department photo.)*

**Steelheaders** will find best prospects on the lower Methow River, on the Columbia below Chief Joseph Dam, above and below Wells Dam and in the Priest Rapids-Ringold stretch.

**Top waters for spinyray enthusiasts** include ever-popular Banks and Moses lakes, Potholes Reservoir and several

ponds on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. **Whitestone Lake** in the Okanogan will be a winner for **crappie and largemouth bass**.

Prospects for **upland bird hunting** in this region look better than last year, but are still **well below the banner years** of 1979, 1980 and 1981. **Quail populations**



*Hunting the high country gives hunters a chance to enjoy the brisk beauty of autumn in the mountains, free from the crowds and noise of more accessible hunting areas. (Mike Siegrist Sr. photo)*

should still provide good hunting in Okanogan and Douglas counties.

**Chukar and huns** did not produce well last summer, and their populations **may not reach former levels** for several years. Hunting for these species will likely be only fair this year.

Columbia Basin **pheasant hunting should be improved** over last year. Broodstock is down 15 percent from last year, but we anticipate a very **good hatch of young birds**. This year's **farm crop patterns** should also improve hunting. Less corn acreage because of a new agricultural program will make pheasants more available to hunters.

We anticipate another **good year for local duck production**. Near record water levels in Okanogan and Douglas county ponds should produce an **excellent crop of ducks for early season hunters**, but the forecast for Alberta mallards is not good. Water levels are still poor, and duck production in the North could be no better than last year. Production of **western Canada geese** (honkers) in the Columbia River Basin is **up about 10 percent** from last year.

**Okanogan deer hunters** can expect at least an average deer season. Last winter's losses were average, and summer forage was abundant. By October, **deer should be in excellent condition**. A few game management **unit boundaries have been changed**. The Chewack (218), Alta (242) and Gardner (231) units have been enlarged to incorporate the Twisp unit (230), which no longer exists. The Gardner unit will continue to have a **three-point restriction**. That same restriction will also apply this year during the early buck hunt in the Pasayten Wilderness (700). — *Joe Foster, Don Zeigler*

## Vancouver Region

(Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Klickitat, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties)

Another mild winter and high escape-ment levels through the 1982 seasons will provide **big game hunters** with increasingly **favorable opportunities for a successful season**. A variety of **quality hunting areas** are dispersed throughout southwestern Washington. Of particular interest are the 556 Toutle (053, 054) and 524 Margaret (055) units which offer permit-controlled, **five-point or better branched-antlered bull seasons**. The 536 Altona and 558 Marble units are open to all hunters for **three-point or better bull elk**. Herd composition counts have verified the availability of many three- to five-point branched-antlered bulls within the designated quality hunting areas.

Deer hunters will also benefit from **favorable winter escapement and high spring production levels**. The 558 Marble unit is restricted to the taking of **branched-antlered deer** (two-point or better), and open to all hunters. Deer populations in Klickitat County continue to increase and provide **excellent hunting opportunities**. Either-sex and antlerless-only deer and elk permits and branched-antlered bull elk **permit levels will remain comparable to those in 1982**. **Enforcement patrols will be emphasized** in quality hunting areas to reduce the taking of illegal animals.

**Road management efforts** will be similar to 1982. However, the **Abernathy/Stillman area will not be included** this year. Road management programs, with minor modifications, will continue in the Marble Mountain, Cooney Point/Siouxon, Altona/Brookfield and Swift/Mitchell areas. These **restrictions on vehicle access have been very successful** in improving the quality of hunting opportunities.

Waterfowl hunters should take special note of **changes in Canada goose bag limits** in Clark, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Pacific counties. The **bag limit has been reduced** from three to two and the **possession limit to two** as conservation measures. The season in Washington is also shorter this year, running from October 15 to January 1. The new bag limits along the Columbia River are now **consistent with Oregon**. Wildlife managers want to limit the harvest of dusky Canada geese due to a declining population, but hunters are encouraged to take Taverner's geese, a smaller, lighter-colored race of geese that is much more plentiful.

Steelhead anglers will find the East Fork Lewis, Kalama and Cowlitz rivers promising through December. The main stem Toutle River will again be open following a two-year closure due to the Mount St. Helens eruption, but only one trout longer than 20 inches can be caught.

Fall migrations provide **excellent conditions for viewing wildlife**, particularly **waterfowl and raptors**. The lower Columbia River Refuge system provides **roadside viewing opportunities** for a broad spectrum of wildlife including **waterfowl, owls, eagles, Columbian white-tailed deer and Roosevelt elk**. **Wintering eagles and waterfowl** are dispersed all along the Columbia River, while more significant eastern concentrations of waterfowl can be found on the Conboy Refuge in Klickitat County. **Up to 200 whistling swans** can be found on the LaCenter bottoms, occurring mid-November. Watch for the return of **wintering rough-legged hawks** in late fall. — *Tara Zimmerman*

## Aberdeen Region

(Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, Pacific, and Thurston counties)

Many of the **lowland lakes** in the region are still **open for fishing in October** (check your pamphlet). Fishing improves as waters cool down and trout feed more readily. Also the **May fingerling plants** in selected lakes will be of **legal size**. These, plus the carryover, should make for good fishing.

**Forest grouse season** continues through the month of October. An unusually dry and mild May this year was beneficial for brood survival, and we expect **good populations of grouse** in the region. **Ruffed grouse** occur mainly at lower elevations and favor mixed stands of conifers and broadleaf species, while **blue grouse** are found in clearcuts at higher elevations. Considering the relative abundance of this species, the blue grouse is greatly **underharvested by hunters**.

The **general buck season** begins October 15. While deer occur in all our game management units, those in **Grays Harbor, Thurston, Mason and eastern Jefferson counties** are the best producers. Traditionally, many of the bigger bucks harvested in this region are taken at the **very end of the general buck season**, as the approaching rut causes greater movement of older bucks. Hunters should note that the Skykomish Unit (636) this year will only be open to bucks having at **least two antler points**.

Fall is also a season of increased opportunities for **wildlife viewing**. Many species of birds not normally observed during the summer months can be seen in early fall as they migrate south along the coast and through the southern Puget Sound lowlands. Specifically, large numbers of **plovers and sandpipers** use Grays Harbor and Willapa Bays on their journey south. Some of these birds winter here. **Bowerman Basin** (adjacent to the Hoquiam airport) is also an excellent spot to watch for the **rare peregrine falcon**.

Due to the extremely mild winter, **elk calf survival was very good**. Consequently, the number of **spike elk** available this fall **should be above average**. There are, however, a number of units in the region this year which will only be open to the taking of **branched-antlered bulls** (check the hunting pamphlet for details). Thus, the Colonel Bob area, south of Lake Quinault, will be open only to the taking of **bulls with at least five antler points**. This area, a portion of which is **under wilderness consideration**, is quite rugged with a relatively **low road density** and should appeal to hunters favoring that type of hunting experience.

Last year's **road closure program** was well received by the public and will again be in effect this year. Some modest expansions in the program are planned for this year. While some closures are only in effect during the general elk season, many extend through the winter, thus **reducing disturbance on the wintering areas.**

A **limited number of hunters** will be allowed to hunt the either-sex deer season on the Indian Island or Bangor naval bases. These hunts are **open to bow and shotgun hunters** only and access to the bases is determined by **random drawing.**

Due to **declining populations of brant** in traditional wintering areas in northern Puget Sound, Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, a **state-wide closure on brant hunting** will be in effect this fall.

The first **winter steelhead** appear in our streams around Thanksgiving, and the last week of December marks the beginning of the **peak period for the hatchery runs.** — *Max Zahn*

## Yakima Region

(Kittitas, Yakima, Benton and Chelan counties)

Fall is a **period of change** for wildlife and the recreational activities that relate to them. Animals are **migrating from summering to wintering areas**, sportsmen are switching from **fishing to hunting activities** and **wildlife viewers** are treated to fresh opportunities for observation.

**General hunting seasons** in the Yakima region are highlighted for many people by the **elk hunt**, as elk migrate from the high Cascades to their wintering grounds in the valley. **Hunting seasons are designed to intercept that flow**, making animals available to the public in the high country while **preventing major buildups of elk on winter ranges** during the hunt.

Last year's **early storms** moved the animals out of the high country early and provided great hunting, causing some people to worry about too many elk being taken. This year, as always, the **weather will play a big part in the elk harvest.**

There have been some **changes in season structure** this year, and **road closures are being considered** to improve the quality of the hunt, so hunters should be sure to **check their pamphlets** before making hunting plans.

**Mule deer** migrate into the mid- to lower elevations of the region after heavy snows along the eastern Cascades, and most deer **hunting success** depends on **migrating deer herds.** The carryover of quail, chukar and pheasant has again

been good, and production success on upland birds should produce **sufficient hunting opportunities.**

Don't overlook **fall fishing opportunities** in the Yakima region, for October and November can provide some of the year's best fishing. **After a few good frosts**, the insects are gone and the **trout are anxious for a meal.** Fish Lake in Chelan County is considered a good bet for some **big brown trout.** **Steelhead fishing** in the Wenatchee River should offer some good action for anglers, with October generally seeing the peak of the run.

**Wildlife viewing** is an increasing source of recreation in the Yakima region, with a unique opportunity presented by a trip to the **Oak Creek Wildlife Recreation Area.** The Game Department feeds **elk in 10 different spots** in the Yakima region, but Oak Creek is the most accessible and gives the large crowds that gather each year their **closest views of elk.** Feeding operations usually begin in mid- to late December, depending on weather and elk movements.

Be sure to keep your eye out for **migrating "watchable" wildlife** such as **waterfowl, bald eagles and other raptors.** These birds show up throughout the region in October and continue

through December. **Raptors and passerine birds** (perching songbirds) usually congregate in lowland areas during the winter. The National Audubon Society holds **annual Christmas bird counts** each year to **monitor population trends**, and wildlifers who would enjoy taking part should contact the Game Department or local Audubon chapter.

A large bird often spotted in the region during winter is the **common barn owl.** Foraging for mice or other small creatures along roadways at night, it's often mistaken for the snowy owl, an occasional winter visitor to Washington. If a big white owl flashes by your headlights some night, chances are it's a barn owl, but don't be too sure! — *Lee Stream*

## Spokane Region

(Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla and Whitman counties)

Fall is the season of the hunter. In the Spokane region, one of the first hunting opportunities is for **chukars.** The best chukar hunting is found in the south, **near the Snake River.** **Cheatgrass slopes** above Asotin, **on the breaks of the**

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**Grande Ronde River**, and in Wawawai and Steptoe Canyons, usually offer **productive gunning**. The last two brood years have been poor ones for chukars. But the mild winter of 1982-83 should make for a **better crop of birds**. An early opener will again allow scattergunners to hunt **chukars and huns** before the general upland bird season.

**Pheasant shooting** will be best in agricultural areas south of Davenport in Lincoln County and in the Palouse Hills of Whitman and northern Garfield counties. **Drainage ditches, fencerows and brushy "eyebrows"** on hillsides are excellent areas to work a dog. Department of Game habitat plots remain **choice spots for ringnecks**. Preliminary pheasant counts indicate a **fair crop of birds for 1983**.

An outstanding opportunity for bird hunters comes with the **late grouse season** in mid-November. Opening at a time when most upland gunners are out in the field, this region-wide season can provide **high-quality hunting** and a good chance to work a dog undisturbed. Also, **leaf drop from deciduous trees** will have cleared some shooting alleys in grouse thickets, making for more productive gunning. The best areas are ruffed grouse coverts in **Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties**.

**Deer season** will open just a bit later this year than last — on October 15. **Mule**

**deer herds** on the east side are **stable, though heavily cropped**. **Whitetail hunting** will again be excellent in the **northern part of the region**, with about half the harvested bucks expected to be **mature** (more than two and a half years old) **animals**.

Some hunters believe that all the **trophy mule deer** are gone from eastern Washington — though most will admit that **big whitetails are taken routinely**, especially during the late buck hunt. Well, even heavily hunted mule deer populations can continue to produce **record-book heads**. Last year a muley buck taken in Ferry County scored a whopping **197 Boone and Crockett points**. These monsters, though, are **elusive animals**, often shunning traditional open parks and exposed rimrock areas. Modern mule deer, especially the bigger bucks, know how to make use of **dense vegetation**. Hunting them can be similar to chasing whitetails.

If you're not a bird hunter, or if you fill your deer tag early, you might want to try **fall fishing** in the Spokane region. The **brown trout** can be a worthy quarry on the **Pend Oreille and Colville rivers**, as well as on **Rock Lake**. **Wild rainbow trout** are catchable on the **Kettle River**, and the upper reaches of **Lake Roosevelt** are a good bet for **walleyes and big rainbows**.

Perhaps the most significant news for

fall anglers this year is the **new steelhead program on the Snake River**. To ease enforcement problems, simplify regulations and promote better cooperation between agencies, **Oregon, Idaho and Washington** have agreed to **concurrent seasons** on bordering waters.

At their July 8 meeting, Washington Game Commissioners approved a September 1 to March 31 **steelhead season on the Snake**. Split into two segments, the season will be for **clipped-fin hatchery fish only**, from September 1 to November 14. **Dorsal fin heights** of no more than 2¼ inches will be required on creel fish. **Barbless hooks** are also mandatory. A **two-steelhead daily limit** is in effect. Most fish caught during this time on the lower Snake will be steelhead reared at Idaho's Salmon River hatcheries.

From November 14 to March 31, **fin and hook restrictions will be relaxed** from the Snake River mouth upstream to Idaho's Redbird Creek. Beyond this point, the above fin and hook requirements will remain in effect **the entire season**.

The Grande Ronde River will provide a **catch-and-release fishery** for steelhead in 1983.

This year is a milestone in **steelhead production** for the Spokane region, as it marks the **first release of steelhead smolts** from the new **Lyons Ferry hatchery**. Roughly half the 600,000 fish have been released in the Oregon portion of the Grande Ronde River, and the rest in Washington streams. At full capacity, the Lyons Ferry installation will produce **one million steelhead** a year, as well as **nine million fall chinook**.

Part of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan of 1974, the Lyons Ferry project will **augment steelhead production** from the Irrigon and Wallowa hatcheries in Oregon and from the Clearwater and Salmon installations in Idaho. The first return runs of Lyons Ferry fish will be in the **fall of 1985**.

Since **steelhead programs** are very costly and steelhead management is of the highest priority in Washington's freshwater fish program, biologists are concerned that their data be **as complete as possible**. Good fish management and good fishing hinge on **cooperation from anglers**. Creel data are extremely important to biologists in the management of all game fish and cannot be obtained solely from random sampling. This year, make sure you **return that punchcard!** — Wayne vanZwoll

## Seattle Region

(Island, King, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties)

Fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing



*Fair game for falconers includes pheasant, partridge, quail, grouse and rabbits. A special falconry season extends through February. (Pam Wood photo.)*

opportunities abound in this region in the fall. **Fall fishing** should be exciting on **lakes Washington and Sammamish**, located adjacent to the Seattle metropolitan area. The Game Department's new *Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish Access Map and Gamefish Guide* is available free at 130 license outlets in King and Snohomish counties. It **spells out fishing opportunities** by species for each month of the year.

For fall, expect **good still fishing for rainbow**, with **cutthroat coming on in late November**. **Perch fishing** has no catch limit and is expected to be hot for this fall. **Largemouth and smallmouth bass** should provide plenty of enjoyable fishing experiences for fall anglers. For lakes Washington and Sammamish, refer to the season fishing chart in the gamefish guide for the best fishing months.

The **hunting outlook is similar to last year's**, with only a few changes. The **state-wide brant hunting closure** will affect hunters in this region. It was **made necessary by declining populations of**

**brant** in wintering areas such as northern Puget Sound. Generally, however, mortality of game species was low, thanks to a mild winter, and the seasons set are much like those in 1982. Hunters should be aware of the **closure of the late buck season in part of the Mashel unit** to protect the low buck population. There are **road management programs** at Elbe Hills, White River and St. Regis. The **San Juan access problem** remains. The either-sex season there is an effort to increase the harvest and **ease overcrowding** of the deer population. **Bear populations** are expected to be good, while **grouse hunting** is apparently headed for an excellent year, based on the warm, dry spring that provided good production of young. The **pheasant release** program will remain at about the same level as last year.

Great **wildlife viewing** is accessible during fall throughout the Puget Sound area. Many bird species migrate through or winter in western Washington. **Bald eagles** congregate along the Skagit River

near Rockport, and **whistling and trumpeter swans** winter on the Skagit Habitat Management Area west of Conway, and on areas north and east of Mount Vernon.

**Waterfowl viewing** opportunities increase as migrating birds arrive from Alaska and Canada, with **snow geese** concentrating on Skagit and Port Susan bays. Snow goose watching has become quite popular in recent years, but biologists are concerned about the danger of **"loving them to death."** Wildlife viewers may disturb birds to get photographs, "buzz" them with aircraft or boats, or in other ways lessen the worth of the area as wildlife habitat.

**Seabirds** grow in numbers and species during the fall around Puget Sound, and the early fall is the last chance to see **small mammals in the high country** before snowfall. The North Cascades, Stevens and Snoqualmie passes offer plenty of hiking trails for **observation of mammals and birds.** — Maureen Pierre □



*Fall scenes of ducks and golden leaves carry a universal appeal for wildlife enthusiasts. This photo, "Mallard Reflections," by Don Olson, won third place in the second annual photo contest held by Snake Lake Nature Center in Tacoma.*